

## Aberystwyth University

### *Autosuggestion: Between performance and design*

Shanks, Michael; Pearson, Mike

*Published in:*  
Performance Research

*DOI:*  
[10.1080/13528165.2014.935188](https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2014.935188)

*Publication date:*  
2014

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Shanks, M., & Pearson, M. (2014). Autosuggestion: Between performance and design. *Performance Research*, 19(3), 101-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2014.935188>

#### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Aberystwyth Research Portal (the Institutional Repository) are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Aberystwyth Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Aberystwyth Research Portal

#### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

tel: +44 1970 62 2400  
email: [is@aber.ac.uk](mailto:is@aber.ac.uk)

# Autosuggestion

## Between performance and design

PEARSON | SHANKS

It's 7.30 p.m. on Friday 28 June 2013. They hear us coming from a long way off; and our entrance is dramatic. We drive up in Bill Barranco's 1956 Chevrolet – a custom job in black primer paint with a noisy V8 hot-rodded 409 big-block engine. So begins *Autosuggestion*, an hour-long presentation in nine episodes: a new work of theatre/archaeology – the re-articulation of fragments of the past as real-time event. Offered in the atrium between the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (the d.school) and the design division of the Stanford School of Engineering at Stanford University – design studio repurposed as stage.

We each contribute nine texts, from our different disciplinary perspectives: on the automobile as artefact, as assemblage, as performer, agent, actor, probe; on the automobile in performance, as performance; on time, concept and scenario. Our itinerary – accompanied by new images of details of the Chevy and documentary performance footage – takes our audience from rural Britain in the 1950s through industrial South Wales in the 1980s to California in the United States today. Along the way we offer commentaries on windshields and upholstery, nausea and the body politic, mirrors and engine parts, landscapes and the sublime, urban surveillance



and provocation, door catches and handles, murder and assassination; on design and style, and desire and body/machine engagements and entanglements. The car as a feature of personal histories and as a totem of the twentieth century: suggestive, connotative, representational ...

Our principal question: just what is an automobile? Material object; motive potential; locus of experience and memory; mnemonic for production-line industry and for the open road; destructive force; voice; music. A thing: ever present in contemporary life. With Bill's Chevy as recurrent reference point, focusing our enquiry, stimulating reflection. But as with all else here, not quite what it may seem.

### 1. LIFE CYCLE

**Michael Shanks** – relating the history of this one automobile. Of its origins as a two-tone 'Tri-Five' Chevrolet, built in Oakland in 1956: 'the most iconic of them all, appearing alongside Marilyn Monroe as the symbol of everything American'; of its cutting, stripping, restoration and re-imagining – as a 1970 hot rod, with no rear seats.

**Mike Pearson** – recalling childhood memories of the 1950s: of pedal cars; of watching the infrequent passing traffic; of 'smoky autos' – both inside, and out; of column gearshifts and rudimentary synchromesh; of arcane practices like double-declutching. With no power steering: heavy handling. Bench front seats: no safety belts. Under hard braking, my father would fling his left arm sideways – to prevent us flying through the windscreen. As I too still do, in an inculcated reflex. Antique gestures of motoring, surviving faintly.



## 2. HOST AND GHOST

**MS** – 'In Monte Hellman's 1971 movie *Two-Lane Blacktop* it's a souped-up 1955 Chevy': the car that 'Driver' – singer/songwriter James Taylor, in his first and only movie role – pits against Warren Oates's Pontiac GTO, original 'muscle' car.

'The Pontiac is a stark contrast to the '55 Chevy – gimmicky, slick and tacky in comparison to the minimalist, somewhat brutal, completely custom-built home-made hot rod with dual quad tunnel ram 454 engine, four-speed manual transmission, and with black primer paint, like Bill's. The genealogy of the Chevy in *Two-Lane Blacktop* is quite different to the GTO. You bought the GTO at the dealership. If you knew what you were doing you could fit a Chevy big block 409 or bigger truck engine, bought second-hand, into a lightweight body – a Tri-Five Chevy did nicely – add modifications like two four-throat carbs, Offenhauser manifold, Edelbrock cylinder heads, as Bill has done, and you get a drag racer that has little to do with the car corporation, and nothing to do with any comfortable consumer image they wanted to market.

'Of course the movie makes of all of this an allegory – who you are is about how you do what you do. Embodied in the artefact and what you do with it.

'Bill's Chevy is haunted by this media ghost – big block, black primer, pared down.'

**MP** – reflecting on Brith Gof's *Gododdin* (1988): a sixth-century battle elegy staged in the abandoned Rover car factory in Cardiff. Disabled

vehicles as scenographic components, mute anachronisms become topographic features of a ghostly landscape laid out within the host building – 'Providing illumination with their headlights; and platforms for heroic posturing.' The smashing and rolling of vehicles, leaving a field of wreckage: the Thatcherite project to dismantle British heavy industry made manifest.

## 3. THE TRANSIENT

**MP** – describing Pearson/Brookes's *Lynette: The body of evidence* (1997), the story of a murder in Cardiff's dockland, in which the voice of a roving radio-miked performer was relayed to a small audience in a parking lot adjacent to the scene, clustered around a car, listening to the car's radio.

**MS** – 'The road, the port and docks, have always been about transiency. Passing through, moving on. The car, of course, embodies this in a particular way. We look out through the windshield, the glass, the mirror. Everything is framed. The frame is what gives significance to whatever it is that we witness as we drive past.

'Screens and frames – drive-in movies, with the movie on-screen framed by windshield. Even the great evangelical churches of America are completely dependent upon the parking lot, and have adopted the staging of the mass performance – assembled massed crowds watching the diminutive distant figure of the preacher enlarged on-screen.

'Drive-in, drive-past experience. Screen and frame make sense of the indeterminacy of the

transient, the ephemerality of experience – making a statement and moving on – finding significance in event and report – with the artefact, the car, as an agent in witnessing.

‘Screens and frames are central to such forensic potentials – allowing the possibility of constructing narrative out of what might just pass by, out of the transiency and indeterminacy. Though the result in Cardiff was that the police framed those convicted for Lynette’s murder in a notorious miscarriage of justice.’

#### 4. NOMADIC EXPERIENCE

**MP** – recounting Mike Pearson/Mike Brookes’s *Polis* (2001) – ‘a multisite performance work, for one room and other places’ – in which small audiences travelled across the city in taxis, in search of performers at dispersed locations; then recording them and returning with video footage which when projected in juxtaposition revealed a unitary story. Performance becomes itinerant, peripatetic: offering en route unfamiliar prospects of the city, as it scrolled past.

**MS** – ‘Such an itinerary is what in rhetoric is termed “parataxis”, the trope of “this and this and this and this ...”, when there just might be no significance at all in the succession of places, when the assembly of people and places passed typically contains no narrative, other than that of journey.

‘What then of this flickering experience of passing scenes and transient happenings, both intended and otherwise? Nomadic experience – the juxtaposition and layering of components that come at us. Is there ever a story in this trope of parataxis – except when framed? Except when mediated, except as we interact with instrumentality – the dashboard of dials and controls, operations and feedbacks that orient us in our cyborg assemblage with power train, suspension, wheels, roads, streets, signs and others who move across our field of view, across our path. The vehicle a partner in our explorations of the world.’

How do we offer some coherence to this

nomadic experience? How are we to represent the nomadic experience of driving? Are we not required to treat the car as an assemblage, of passings-by as much as metal parts, of conversations held within as much as styles and trims, of the political economy of the twentieth century as much as engine capacity and performance. The archive will need to cope with such forensic portfolios.

#### 5. LOOKING OUT

**MP** – relating Pearson/Brookes’s *Rain Dogs* (2002), which was composed of video sequences of performers abroad in the city, crossing its terrain – one of them by taxi: ‘He looked out on scenes of drunkenness and mayhem. Witnessed en passant from the taxi’: on-screen and – with doors automatically locked – screened off.

**MS** – ‘Surveillance has become quite comfortable to many. We may feel secure in our locked interiors. Sitting comfortably as we chatter through our machines that are everywhere monitored. The car, on the move, “screened off”, may make us feel more secure, in a third space, neither public nor private. And the upholstery is better than ever! Perhaps it can compensate? Designed ergonomically, with these human factors in mind?’



## 6. LOCKED IN

**MP** – reflecting upon *Be Music, Night* (2005) created in Chicago with saxophonist Peter Brötzmann's Chicago Tentet and including pre-recorded footage of a man and woman shot in the rear of a taxi: 'For half an hour, we travelled through the city, engaging in a non-stop, improvised physical duet that consisted of thirty distinct sections, each lasting exactly 1 minute: we embraced, kissed cheeks, looked past, turned away, pulled, pushed, copied, mirrored, modelled ... Recalling trysts in cars.

'In performance: the videos serving as enactment, illustration, counterpoint, contradiction, ambiguous commentary on [Kenneth] Patchen's words ...

'And with all the motion, in all directions, in our mobile choreography, without straphangers, we began to feel sick – carsick. Evoking queasy memories of the 1950s: that combination of oil and leather and pot-holed winding country roads and rudimentary suspensions.'

**MS** – 'Windows and soundproofing create the sense of an interior set against the outside. The bodywork is like skin, integument. Airbags maintain the separation of inside and out. Locks and seat belts attach us to the car. And the carriage, the seating compartment, the coachwork has long ceased to be separate from the chassis, as it was up to the 1940s – car bodies are now unified assemblages, monocoque, working together to deliver protection and performance. We are with-the-vehicle and locked in. Inside, not outside.'

**MS** – the story of Tazio Nuvolari: one of the most iconic of racing drivers.

'There were no seat belts back then. The helmet was cursory (Nuvolari always slept with a hairnet to protect his coiffure!). The driver in the open. No inside-outside, but rather attachment. And when things go wrong you do everything to get free of the car – detachment – you don't want to be caught with hundreds of pounds of flying metal.

'One particular photo of Nuvolari haunts me. He has just won the 1927 Prix Royal in Rome

[the II Royal Automobile Club Grand Prix]. He is exhausted, out of fuel. His mechanic lifts his slight frame out of the car, like any other part. He later raced wearing a mask – because breathing the fumes of exotic benzene-based fuels had so damaged his lungs. This is intimate human-machine interaction in the mode of Frankenstein's creature.'

## 7. THE SUBLIME

**MP** – recalling listening to *Carrlands* (2007), a three-hour audio-work of text and soundtrack created for an agricultural landscape. 'My car as mobile gazebo – architectural construct of contemplation – we too sit looking out on this: the windscreen condensing and concentrating the vista as in a Claude glass [black mirror]. We regard the land – as the English so frequently seem to do – from a parked vehicle: stereotypically, a mute couple, gazing at the sea. Drive-in landscape.'

The work increasingly rendering this deserted place as a scene of disquiet and uncanniness: 'And perhaps as you listen, quietly press central locking, and keep an eye on the rear-view mirror ...'

**MS** – 'Such instruments, like the screen, windshield, rear-view mirror, forge our experience of things. Instruments can transport us to the edge. In the picturesque sublime we look over the cliff at the chasm running through a land that may well be hostile. In the flatlands the overwhelming presence of the sky that has no topographic relief offers a sublime sense of human insignificance.'

**MS** – Mobility is a state of mind as much as personal physical displacement. 'This is very evident in our contemporary world of mobile (media) devices – both car and smartphone are of the same order of contemporary personal mobility, including communication across distance, reach and speed, displacement and movement, encompassing viewing, walking, shifting, transporting. And all through assemblages of glass, metal, machinery, electrical circuits.'



## 8. PROBING

**MP** – remembering the inclusion of automobiles in National Theatre Wales’s staging of Aeschylus’s *The Persians* (2010), in a replica village on a military training range.

‘Suddenly the sound of a blaring car horn and a heavy, black sedan powered straight into the midst of the crowd, and came to rest. I was driving a car from my childhood: a 1958 Rover 90 with prehensile gear stick; ratchet handbrake; wing mirrors; that leaked oil; that we had to coax into life each evening with full use of the choke. Smoky autos: grinding gears, blowing exhausts.’

**MS** – ‘And here in the performance the car acts as cultural probe. They arrived and posed questions that prompted response. “What’s this car up to?” Poke something, introduce something, intervene, interrupt and see what happens – this is probing.

‘There’s a rhetorical aspect to this, of course – setting up questions, setting up juxtapositions that puzzle, so as to elicit response. Let me try another line of questioning, one you may not have thought of ... It’s a tactic of the assembly and law court. Probing witnesses.’

**MP** – ‘But this was not a period production: why the anachronism of the old Rovers? What do these cars represent?

‘Perhaps this is an aristocracy that retains its vehicles as a show of national, industrial heritage; or because, in their irregular ceremonial role, their mileage is still low ...

‘Perhaps because these are the only vehicles left running in a threadbare nation ...

‘Perhaps as a dramatic conceit: a subtle reference to the height of the Cold War ...

‘Perhaps, in the end, because we just wanted the opportunity to drive “classic” cars, as free of regulations as the site itself: with four gears, bench seats, no seat belts.

‘To experience the ergonomics of past motoring – posture; manual engagement; wrestling with steering and propulsion and braking ... With all that is now “assisted” or removed entirely from the driver’s concern: forfeited to the automobile itself ...

‘*Automobility* – we are witnessing the arrival of the age of the intelligent autonomous vehicle.

‘Desire as well as necessity an equal driver in our compositional approaches to performance.

‘What the old Rovers offer is the look and feel of heavy vehicles on the road, a glimpse of the past pitching into the present; rolling heritage; them here, in our present, functioning.

‘And this before the oil runs out and they become museum exhibits, or chicken hutches, or less-than-mobile homes ...

‘Incidentally, we bought them both, and we sold them both, on eBay.’

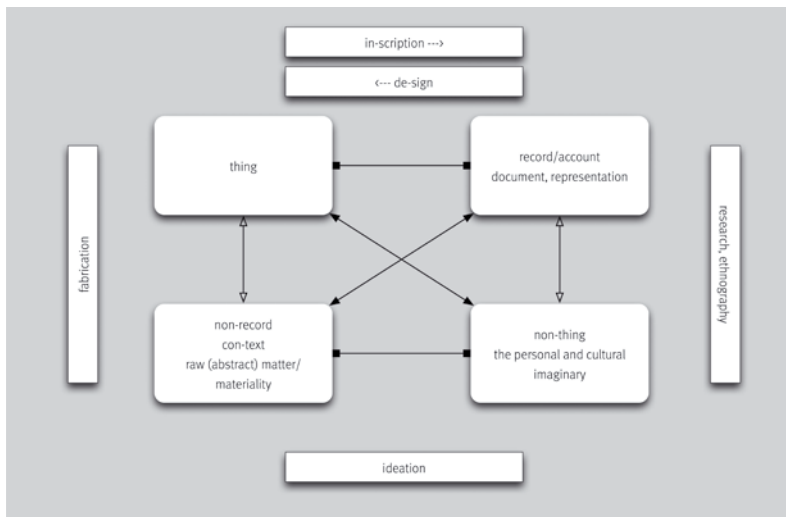
**MS** – ‘These old Rovers might make a claim to be classics, part of the historical landscape. Were they witnesses to something that needs to be remembered? Do they stand for something, just as those great Mercedes-Benz model 770s, Hitler’s choice mode of transport, came almost to stand for the Third Reich?

‘Cars partake of a forensic dramaturgy – where their characteristics make cases for significance. History is all about advocacy – “this shows that this is the way it happened”. And it happens in the law court and the gathering of those who can speak, listen and act, spaces of connection and association, of converging and diverging mobility, places of assembly.’

## 9. RES PUBLICA

**MP** – reflecting upon the highly mediatized production of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* (2012) by National Theatre Wales in association with the Royal Shakespeare Company, staged in a disused, Second World War aircraft hangar.



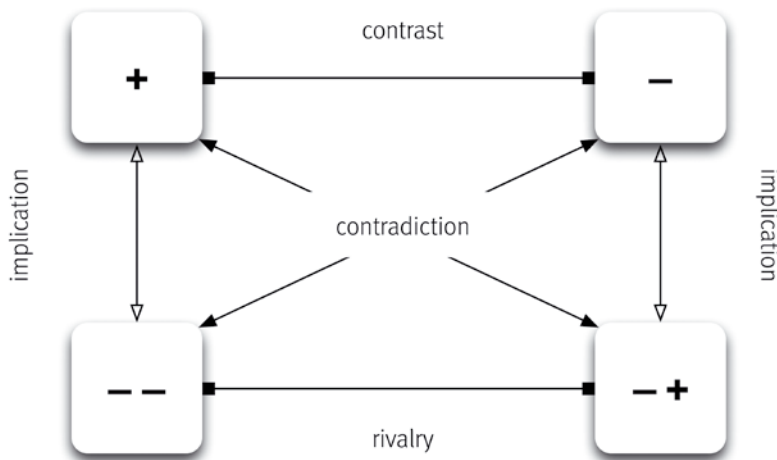


■ Figure 1:  
Pragmatographia – design

That included moving vehicles: ‘Inserting kinesis into the dramaturgy: momentum; traction; drive. With scenes on and in vehicles: the roof of the van as a platform for oration, its illuminated rear – with doors open – the place of the interrogation of Coriolanus. Aufidius watched the pleading of Coriolanus’s mother Volumnia for Rome, from the front seat through a windscreen; her success was marked not by a triumphal re-entry into Rome, but a hurried exit in the Volvo into a dark night, knowing she had ensured his enemy’s demise.

‘Vehicles as temporary scenographic settings, locations, enclosures: at rest, and in motion. Camera focus zooming in, into interiors; and pulling out for cortèges ...

■ Figure 2: The semiotic square



Allusions to the shifting identity of the automobile in contexts of contemporary conflict: as symbol of newfound status; as temporary refuge; as weapon; as detritus.’

**MS** – ‘When you put your foot down, Bill’s Chevy fills with gasoline fumes. It’s down to those carburettors, the amount of fuel going into the 409 cubic inches of eight engine cylinders. I have long been suspicious of the concept of zeitgeist – spirit of the age – too Hegel, too idealist, not grounded in the complexities and contradictions of material experience. But atmosphere, as spirit of the times, is a suitable designation for the car and everything that comes with it, as medium breathed, ambient, both nourishing and potentially poisonous.

‘In this the car is indeed *res publica* – the public thing, shared principles of agency and experience, of political economy as well as the assembly in which the cultural imaginary is lived out.

‘The car as body politic.’

#### AFTERMATH

And when we have finished, we all gather around Bill’s Chevy. A photo opportunity for colleagues, who pose in dark glasses, who drape out of windows – shades of *American Graffiti*, of *Thelma and Louise*. California dreamin’.

#### THEATRE/ARCHAEOLOGY

Theatre/archaeology plays upon the tension between theatre as formalized locale and institution, and performance, which we conceive, after Elin Diamond (1996: 1), as both a doing and a thing done – pursuit and event. Archaeology pursues the object that may relate to past act and event, past performance.

At the core of the theatre/archaeology project, therefore, is a question of aftermath, of what comes after the event. What constitutes pursuit and event such that there may be remains? Questions of memory, of reenactment and return, of mimesis – making good the loss, offering stand-ins. And inevitably there are

questions of re-presentation, of document, inscription, transcription.

We identify three spatio-temporal orientations:

1. *chora* – location and locale, inhabitation, occupation, site (specifics), encounter and visit, and subsuming theatre, stage and presence
2. *assemblage* – gathering, assembly, mise en scène, scenography, collection and displacement
3. *metamorphosis* – ruin and loss, the transformations of representation and documentation.

We will unpack some temporal aspects of these through a short narratological analysis.

#### MIMETIC/EIDETIC

First, compare the mimetic and what we may term the *eidetic*, in relation to these material architectonics.

The mimetic, imitation, the work of *mimos* (actor in ancient Greek), refers to a set of questions about the real and the represented. Often mimesis is connected with metaphor and simile: the relationship between real and represented is one of analogy, comparison, likeness--‘it was like this’, ‘as if it happened like this’.

In its representation of everyday life, performance is both synecdochic (substituting a part for the whole), and metonymic (standing in place of). Richard Schechner (1985:51-2) famously emphasized the double temporal component of performance. He calls it ‘restored’, or ‘twice-behaved’ behaviour, consisting of physical, verbal or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first-time – ‘here is the way it was’. The notion of the eidetic takes the matter further and poses questions of how we treat the materiality (the actuality) of performance and the performed. The eidetic refers, in some psychological use, to mental imagery that is vivid and persistent, for example, photographic memory. Eidetic memory means memory of a sensory event that is as accurate as if the person were still viewing, or hearing, in the

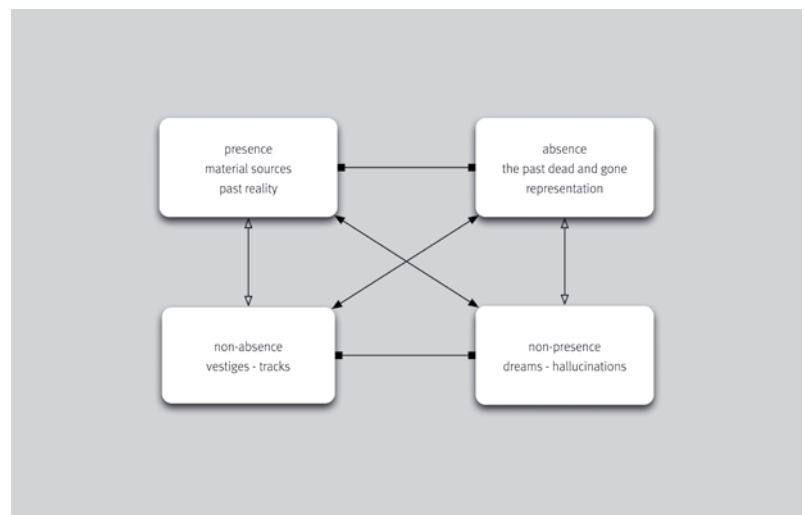


■ Figure 3: Pragmatographia – performance

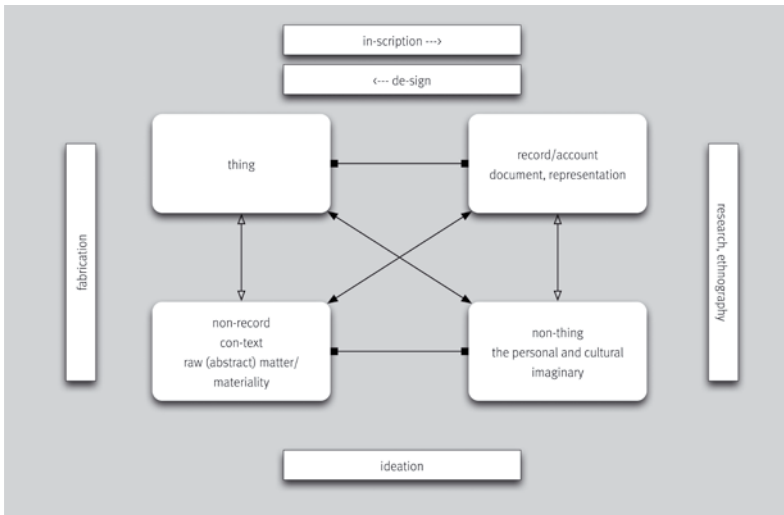
presence of the original object, present at the event. We emphasize the instructive etymology of the word ‘eidetic’, with roots in the Greek *eido* and its cognates (to know, see, experience; that that is seen, form, model, type, image, phantom) and hold that performance is eidetic because it raises questions of what is real and what is simulated, what persists, what is at the heart of experience (knowledge, impressions, physical materials?). Connecting ontology and epistemology. What is it that we experience and know?

Performance, as eidetic, is ironic: in its act of re-presentation, performance is this-and-that, simulated and real. The political or legal representative is a person speaking in democratic

■ Figure 4: Presence and absence







■ Figure 5: Time, memory and redemption

or judicial assembly for others, conveying their voice. Performance is ironic in drawing upon theatrical metaphors. For while we may suppose a script, performance has no such sole origin and there is always that gap between script and act, as well as between performer and audience, representative and constituency, legal representative and accuser/accused.

What is being acted out in performance? Who is speaking in democratic assembly – representative or constituency? We should answer that there is only ever the irony of reiteration without an ultimate origin, simulation without an original. Representative or constituency? – at best it is both. And in these iterative chains the question of performance is immediately the question of how we may speak and write of performance, given the irony.

Performance is about reiterating, re-mediating, re-working, re-storing, re-presenting, re-enacting. This also is archaeology – working with what remains. We seek in vain a representation that will explain the ruin of history. In dealing with remains, the archaeologist in all of us is working upon relationships between past and present that circle around the impossible irony of trying to turn action and experience, material form and body, remediated, into representation. There can thus be no finality to mimesis, only constant reworking and restoring.

*Autosuggestion* placed in suspension the ontology of Bill's '56 Chevy, as we bore witness to its dispersal, its itinerary, encounters, gatherings, transformations.

Doings and things done; an artefact and its dispersal through its making and remaking, the assemblage of relationships and processes that make it what it is. The concept that encompasses this complexity is *pragma* (plural *pragmata*), from the ancient Greek. *Pragmata* are 'things', but also 'deeds', 'acts' (things done), 'doings', 'circumstances' (encounters), 'contested matters', 'duties' or 'obligations'.

The verb at the root of *pragmata* is *prattein* – to act in the material world, engaged with things. This is cognate with making as poetics (the Greek root is *poiein*) – a creative component to practice generally.

*Pragmatology* is the term we suggest for the field that deals with such tensions as those explored in theatre/archaeology.

*Pragmatographia* is, accordingly, the documentation and representation of *pragmata* – address to the question of how to grasp this movement, the cycles of encounter, associations and suggestions, and the return to the thing itself. Representation introduces the crucial involvement of the representative, or even advocate, mobilizing materials, making cases in the law court or the assembly of the people.

Consider now Figure 1. This is a semiotic square (after Greimas; see Hébert 2014) – a means of exploring our scenarios of encountering things, of representation and transformation. Figure 6 is a generic schematic.

A semiotic square is a visual representation of the logical articulation of any category. You start with a term, category, theme, thing that is important to a narrative, scenario or account and then map various types of oppositions and relationships. It is important to note that such diagrams as these are not meant to be definitive so much as they are meant to be suggestive and heuristic – mapping relationships in this way helps us see what we may otherwise assume or overlook.

Antonyms or contrasts (logical 'contraries'). These are terms that are comparatively graded on the same implicit dimension, for example, good:bad, where 'bad' is not necessarily 'not-good'. Here we begin with the articulation of the car, a thing, and records and accounts made of it, memories, documents, representations.

Oppositions (logical 'contradictories'). These are mutually exclusive terms, for example, alive:not alive, although they are inevitably associated dialectically. Here one of the contradictories is that that is not a document/record/representation – we may consider this to be the context for the encounter with the car, as well as its raw matter perhaps. Then there is that that is not the thing itself – this could be the cultural and personal imaginary that may be distinguished from the thing, the car.

Implications and rivalries. Associated terms to the left and right of the square may appear synonymous (here a record or document is indeed not the car, the thing itself), but actually can be distinguished through their relationship with contrary and contradictory terms. So research and ethnography may connect documents, records and representations with accounts and stories, true or false, personal or in the cultural imaginary. Fabrication is what turns raw materials into the car. Ideation, generating ideas and possibilities, connects the imaginary with what may be done with the material out of which a car is fabricated.

The vector from thing to representation is typically one of inscription. Moving from a representation to a thing can be considered a process of design. Our explorations in *Autosuggestion* map out other components of the design process: researching, exploring ideas and possibilities, contexts of making and experiencing, stories and imaginings, the possibilities offered in encounter with materials shaped through fabrication.

#### PRAGMATOGRAPHIA – PERFORMANCE

In this *pragmatographia*, things are also things done – actions, processes, experiences. *Autosuggestion* took us through a spatio-

temporal itinerary from the materiality of the '56 Chevy through its life of experiences as they articulated with our encounter and reception, our own life experiences and associations we deemed pertinent, collected and assembled in performance.

So substitute 'action/thing done' for 'thing' and you get the semiotic square in Figure 3. Revealed are a series of deep relationships between design and performance, design and political/legal representation, performance and rhetoric.

Action/Event may be represented by document, may leave behind memory, trace or evidence. The opposite of action or event is in-action, perhaps associated with the bystander, the witnesses or audience who did not participate in said event, though, by virtue of dialectic, they are most certainly involved, just as spectatorship is by no means passive. Forensics connects witnesses and evidences in making a case. While a script, as document, may be taken to lead to action and performance, the contradictories to document, trace and evidence – that we may propose as stage, setting and incidental circumstance – are brought together with action and performance in dramaturgy. Scenography associates staging and circumstance with audience, who are also potentially scribes and reporters, documenting what they witness. Or we may say, following our comments above on the eidetic, what they experience, for experience is always an epistemological and ontological challenge – what is it that we just experienced/witnessed, and how do we know?

The settings for this scenario are the assembly, law court and theatre, and such that we may speak of the architecture of arrangement as hybrid place/event. Constituting acts are of making and recording witness statements, gathering and mobilizing evidence, presenting cases, performances, assemblages that connect site to evidence to statement to action/event, to the people in assembly. Characters include the agent/actor, perpetrator, accused/accuser, the witness, scribe, the advocate rhetor who forges argument and presents a case, the judge, adjudicator who

listens and presides over the case (in Greek this is the *istor*, origin of our word history), jurors and those gathered for the event.

#### THEATRE/ARCHAEOLOGY, ICHNOLOGY, THE TEMPORALITY AND POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE AND DESIGN

Bill's '56 Chevy was present there with us, and transported us back, a kind of witness to all manner of things and events.

Figure 4 begins again with the car, the remains of the past in the present, and the absent past to which they refer. Add to these their contradictions – the non-present, and the non-absent. The absent past may imply that it is non-present, but these are not the same thing. The material reality of the past, the Chevy, consists of remains or traces here in the present. The absent past to which they refer takes the form, typically, of the representations of the past we construct on the basis of these and other traces – stories and memories constructed and evoked through the suggestions of the automobile, as evidence, as trace.

In contradiction to material traces are non-present forms that have no material reality or basis. These may be dreams and fantasies, hallucinations even; clearly they are not the same as representations of the past, although we may mistake them for such. The contradiction of an absent represented past, the non-absent past, is a most important component of the square. What is this? How can the past be non-absent?

A footprint is a mark on the present made in the past. A footprint has lingered to become the non-absent past; it is the impression made by the past on the present. The Latin term is *vestigium*, vestige; in Greek *ichnos*, track. The non-absent past is actually very familiar; it is the past that comes back to haunt. It is Freud's notion of the uncanny: something familiar and old-established that has been estranged by forgetting. Or repression: the uncanny may be something that ought to have been kept concealed but that has nevertheless come to light.

The non-absent is ghost-like, a sign left by somebody or something that was once present, but has passed and is gone, lost: a phantasm. This phantasmatic reality is one rooted in future legacy. The footprint or vestige is not like a trace, a material piece of the past here present with us now; it will haunt, when it is found in the future and then witnesses the passing over of what is no more. Its time or temporality, therefore, is neither purely of the past nor the present, nor the re-presented past; it is the past-as-it-interrupts-the-present. The Greek term for such time is *kairos* – the moment of discovery or opportunity, when the past flashes up in the present and prompts reaction. Another term for this kind of time is actuality.

Setting the present in opposition to the past, as times or tenses, invokes the corresponding contradictory temporal states: the past that still has an effect on the present ('they have done this'), and the past to be ('they will have done this'). The diagram in Figure 5 delivers these four temporal states of being in theatre/archaeology:

1. *trace*: the material remains, the persistence of the past in the present – the subject of archaeology (*arche* is source/origin)
2. *vestige*: the articulation of event and haunting non-presence – the subject of ichnology
3. *actuality* (the Greek *kairos*): the moment of intervention of past in the present, the interruption of the present
4. *hope and future prospect*: the dynamic that is captured in the call from Adorno and Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1941): 'What is needed is not the preservation of the past, but the redemption of past hopes' – a particular kind of political representation

#### REFERENCES

- Diamond, Elin (1996) *Performance and Cultural Politics*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hébert, Louis (2014) <http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/semiotic-square.asp> (accessed 31 May 2014)
- Schechner, R. (1985) *Between Theater and Anthropology*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.